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WE CLAIM:

1. A method of customizing a speech based user interface to an application system by means of an input device, said application system comprising a speech user interface subsystem, a profile database, and application components, the method comprising the steps of:

accessing the speech user interface subsystem from an input device;

selecting a profile from the profile database for customization;

customizing user-defined functions for use within said profile;

saving said profile in said profile database of said application system; and

providing said profile to said speech based user interface for presentation upon subsequent access by the user.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein said step of customizing comprises specifying information presented in a status summary.

3. A method according to claim 1 wherein said step of customizing comprises specifying a command menu structure in a dual tone multi frequency driven user interface.

4. A method according to claim 1 wherein said step of customizing comprises specifying a vocabulary structure in a speech recognition driven user interface.

5. A method according to claim 1 wherein said step of customizing comprises creating an additional function that accesses elements external to said application system.

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6. A method of providing a customized speech based user interface to an application system, said application system comprising a speech user interface subsystem, a profile database, and application components, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving an access request from a user;

retrieving a customized profile for the user from said database, said customized profile comprising user-defined functions;

presenting said user-defined functions via said customized speech based user interface in accordance with said customized profile; and

providing access to data elements presented in said user-defined functions.

7. A method according to claim 6 wherein said user-defined functions comprise a status summary.

8. A method according to claim 6 wherein said user-defined functions comprise a command menu structure in a dual tone multi frequency driven user interface.

9. A method according to claim 6 wherein said user-defined functions comprise a vocabulary structure in a speech recognition driven user interface.

10. A method according to claim 6 wherein said user-defined functions comprise additional functions that access elements external to said application system.

11. A communication system comprising:
an input device;
an application system; and
an audio output device;

wherein said application system comprises:

5 a profile database; and
 a speech user interface subsystem.

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13. A communication system according to claim 11 wherein said application system is a unified messaging system.

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14. A communication system according to claim 11 wherein said application system comprises equipment within an automobile.